

renewal or conversion
RENEWAL OR CONVERSION.

A LETTER

TO THE REV. T. COLLINS, B.D., RURAL DEAN,

and to the

Rev. the Clergy of the Deanery of Boroughbridge,

ON THE NECESSITY OF

RENEWAL OR CONVERSION.

BY

THE REV. RICHARD COLLINS, S.C.L.,

DEACON AND MEMBER OF THE RURAL CHAPTER.

"Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou
didst not receive?"—1 Cor. iv. 7.

LEEDS: T. HARRISON, 55, BRIGGATE;

F. AND J. RIVINGTON, LONDON;

SHRIMPTON, OXFORD; MACMILLAN, CAMBRIDGE;

J. D. HANNAM, KNARESBOROUGH.

M DCCCLIV.

A LETTER, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

It may seem to you somewhat strange and presumptuous in one so much your younger, venturing to address his Elders on matters of Religion; and were I to consult my own inclinations,—the inclinations, I mean, of flesh and blood,—these would most assuredly (God is my witness) have persuaded me not to undertake such a task. No doubt, when a deacon thus speaks out publicly to those, who have been entrusted with the cure of souls for many years, an apology may not unreasonably be expected.

In the present case, then, the necessities of the time must be my apology, as they have been the apology of others in times past. No other consideration than this could have moved me to this course. For when the idea of addressing this Letter to you came into my mind, I felt at once that it was possible that wrong constructions might be placed upon my motives in this matter: still I do not on that account shrink, nor dare I shrink from

delivering my soul ; and this I can only do by speaking out in all plainness to you on the practical importance of a Truth, that living Truth, on which the Soul's Salvation depends ; and yet it is one which, I fear, is but little understood by the generality of the clergy. Such language as this from a deacon to his superiors carries with it, I am aware, an appearance of presumption ; but when the eternal happiness or misery of so many souls is at stake, and depends on the faithfulness of your teaching, considerations of this kind, I am sure you will feel, would be out of place.

Not that I have any immediate hope that anything in this letter will all at once bring round your minds to see the necessity of seeking that peace which comes only by the direct agency of the HOLY SPIRIT on the heart of every true believer at his conversion or renewal. Rather do I wish to show that something is wanting in you, which when seen by yourselves, you may desire to have supplied. Many of you no doubt are firmly persuaded that you are true believers, and that you already possess a saving interest in the Redeemer's Blood. Those who really do possess it, and are initiated will understand what I mean in writing.

Were it likely that what I have to say would be brought under your notice in any other way, then gladly would I forego my self-imposed task, or what will perhaps appear to be such.

But I see no probability of this, and deeply realizing, as I do, the necessity of something being done, and that without delay, I am driven to give utterance to my convictions. By God's help I will endeavour to do so definitely and with clearness, trusting that you may be led not only to give the subject your earnest and prayerful consideration, but also that you will search the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church to see whether these things be so. For it is no new thing that I am anxious to propound, but that which has been from the beginning; though alas, in our days, perverted by the defective teaching of sectarianism, or lost in the letter of dogmatism. That, in our present religious teaching there is a want somewhere, which not only mars, but destroys its efficacy, there can be no doubt in any earnest mind; in any mind truly in search of reality and life, as opposed to mere formalism and death. Now it is to the consideration of this want, which I have felt, and which I feel assured many of you still feel, that I am anxious, my Reverend Brethren, to call you attention.

With regard to my past experience, I am free to confess, at once, that before my "conversion," or to use another term, the renewal vouchsafed to me by God's HOLY SPIRIT, I am not aware that ever a single soul was brought to God, through anything I ever said or did. It may have been mine, in some instances, to encourage the feeble-minded, and to comfort the afflicted, with such spiritual

comfort, as I could communicate. But I fear very few, who are in a state of grace, (I mean who *are* reconciled to God through the Blood of His Son,) are attendants on the Ordinances of the Church, while the converted separatist who does enjoy this peace, will naturally care little for any comfort which an unconverted clergyman might be willing to offer. There is a reality in the comfort coming from the man who is renewed in the spirit of his mind, which the unrenewed can neither counterfeit nor assume. Where then there is no respect for the office of CHRIST'S minister and steward, as is the case with the religious separatist, the comfort which such an one offers may be silently received, but will be valued at the true worth, which the renewed man, whether in the Church or out of the Church, well knows it to have.

For my own part, when talking with persons of this class, I was sometimes met with the question, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven you?" as much as to say, if you do not know this, if you do not know that JESUS CHRIST has died for *you* and has blotted out *your* sins, it can be of little purpose your talking to me. If you do not know, by experience, that you are accepted of God, you have enough to do to seek for yourself, without attempting to impart comfort or instruction to others.

My Reverend Brethren, I ask you who have laboured in the work of your parishes, longer and more zealously than myself till your hearts are sick with disappointment,

whether this is not the tone of mind which meets you ; whether it is not the case that the religious separatist does not care one jot or tittle for your intended spiritual comfort or instruction, and that, if the truth were spoken, he would rather be without it ? Although, of course, if he regard the clergyman with any respect at all, through an unwillingness to give offence, he will not receive disrespectfully what is offered to him in a kindly spirit.

Now, what is all this ? Is he unwilling to be taught ? It may be so in some instances ; but it is most certainly true, that when comfort and instruction are offered to him by one who like himself has been converted to God, and enjoys within himself the witness of GOD'S SPIRIT, then he will gladly avail himself of opportunities of instruction, and will relish the things that concern his everlasting peace. He will open his mind freely to one who understands him, and who can help him to bear his burthen. But he knows that the unrenewed man can give him no help.

The unrenewed man, in fact, can neither help him nor any one else to any purpose : and the earnest-minded, unrenewed curate of souls feels conscious of this fact, although he is unable to account for it.

Here then is a fact which cannot be overlooked, and ought not to be disregarded. It is a fact which meets every clergyman more or less frequently in his daily parish-work. And very strange it is that upon minds really earnest, something more than mere perplexity is not produced

by it. I have no need to be told that it is exciting prejudice, in its tenderest point to say, that the converted separatist has a reality, which the merely earnest clergyman has not. The latter may feel the need of further light, but the mind and experience of the separatist is the last quarter in which he will expect it to be. Yet in spite of all prejudices, the truth must be spoken; and the truth is, that this something, which the separatists have, and which too often Churchmen have not, is the secret of their spiritual life; and the want of which is the cause of that formal death, which prevails to so alarming an extent, amongst our church-going population.

To tell you that clergymen may be most zealous in the discharge of pastoral work, and thoroughly earnest in mind and thought, and yet at the same time in darkness and unrenewed by the HOLY GHOST, is, I am aware, to tell you something which may shock the minds of some of you. It will perhaps be called uncharitableness, a presumptuous judging of others, still if it be truth, and from blessed experience I know it is the truth, it must be told with all plainness of speech.

When through the tender mercies of God, a man of God was sent to me, as an Ananias was sent to the blessed Paul, and I was told by him, that though I might be seriously-minded, yet I had not, in me, any of the mind of the SPIRIT, in fact that I was unrenewed in heart and mind, it did not offend me. I thought it was a mistake, and that

notwithstanding his assertion, I had enjoyed some measure of the SPIRIT's influence. I relate this to take from your minds any suspicion that may arise as to my seeming to speak otherwise than in humility and sincerity, and above all, in love, for that is my desire. Truth is severe. I only beseech you to bear with me in all long-suffering, my only motive for speaking at all, being the salvation of souls and the greater glory of God. It is not that there is no zeal; there is much zeal, GOD be thanked. But is it according to knowledge? Zeal for God, I conscientiously believe, was my motive, in the work to which I set my hands in the parish where it was my lot to serve. Inasmuch as it was not the zeal which is the fruit of GOD'S SPIRIT within a man's heart, it could do nothing. It was sometimes hot, often cold. A zeal which never seemed to gain any thing to feed upon, and burnt itself out by feeding upon itself. It was a zeal which longed to save souls and to work for God's glory and yet knew not how.

It was more especially in dealing with the souls of the sick and dying that I discovered my utter incapacity to deal effectually. And this it was chiefly that induced me to retire from the work which the Bishop had entrusted to me. It was a work which I felt unable to do, and a responsibility which I could not bear. Poor wretched sinners were going out of the world, heavy-loaden with sins, and seemingly unconscious of the burthen. I knew

repentance to be necessary for forgiveness, and I knew also by experience what a bitter draught it is ; but to lead them to this knowledge I seemed incapable. To be sure I used to exhort them to call their sins to remembrance, and to beseech God that He would pardon them for CHRIST's sake. But I did not tell them, and could not tell them, for I had not then experienced it, and therefore knew it not, that JESUS would not only hear them, but was ever present to assure them of their forgiveness on their hearty repentance ; that any sinner had only to believe that God had died on the cross for him, though he might be the worst of sinners ; that he had only to abhor himself and to believe this, and then JESUS was ready to speak and say, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

There is no delusion in this. The man that labours under the conviction of sin, who feels what a heavy load it is, will not be persuaded that his burthen is removed, till he feels the weight taken off him. And it can only be removed in one way, by believing that CHRIST JESUS has already borne the weight of it, and has made atonement for his sins ; by believing not merely that He is the Saviour of all men, but that He has actually died for *him* and is *his* Saviour. Then, the instant this act of Faith is made, which is itself the Gift of God, the HOLY SPIRIT is poured into the heart of the believer, the Love of God is shed abroad in it, and he cries out ABBA, FATHER. He praises

GOD who has done so great things for him, for he knows that he is freely justified by faith, which, he finds, is no figure of speech. He knows that being justified by faith he *has*,—not is to have at some future uncertain time, but *has now*, that is, has got hold of and is actually possessed of peace with GOD the FATHER, such a peace he never knew before, it being truly that peace which the world cannot give. For he knows and feels that the Blood of CHRIST is the ransom for the many sins he has committed; that his sins, though many, are forgiven, and there is no longer any separation between himself and his God, for that the Blood of his SAVIOUR has set him at-one with Him, by having blotted out the handwriting that was against him, and taken it out of the way. He perceives that he has passed over from death unto life, and therefore can at all times approach with boldness to the throne of grace, through Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

All this I now know by my having experienced it. And every man who is renewed in the spirit of his mind has experienced it, and will understand what I mean. Yet anything like the latter part of what I have been writing, till within a few months back was hid from mine eyes. I was in darkness, and being in darkness, was wholly unable to guide others to the light. It used to sicken me the little impression that seemed to be made on the minds of the dying when I spoke to them on the necessity of repentance. The words never appeared to go below the

surface of the heart; and it was quite a puzzle to me in what state of mind they were dying. I hoped for the best, but could not say that I had any ground for confidence. There was nothing to be seen but a general torpor of mind and body, a general sluggishness that opposed any exertion. The prayers and instructions that were offered, were rather borne with, than sought after, and I believe there is a sort of general impression that most men, excepting criminals are sure to go to heaven in the end. I was unable to place before their minds in the striking and real way which they who enjoy it alone can do, the blessedness of those, who seek and find peace in the Blood of the Lamb. And that whosoever he be, whether a sinner of the blackest dye, or of the most moral character, he must come in this way to be saved, and that if he only come to JESUS CHRIST, and cast himself down at the foot of the cross, he will be assured that there is salvation for him also.

Again, I ask you, Reverend Brethren, in all humility, if, in your visiting of the sick, you have placed before those troubled in mind the infinite mercies of God through CHRIST, and the great truth that a sinner has only to repent and believe on Him, and that then His Blood is all-powerful to put away sin? Have you (and I press this upon you) have you exhorted those convicted in their consciences of sin, have you exhorted them never to rest pleading with God the death of His SON, until the light of the HOLY SPIRIT has shone into their hearts, and has borne testimony

to them of their acceptance with Him, and has sent them on their way rejoicing? And if you have not, may you not have great cause to fear that you yourselves have not that Divine testimony within you, and that therefore you are unable to point out the right path to others? These may seem severe words, but truth cannot be too freely spoken, or too strongly urged, when the eternal salvation of so many is depending on the fact whether this is the right mode of dealing with souls or is not.

It was not however in dealings with the sick only, that I perceived my incapacity for the work, which was given me to do. It astonished me on first entering on my Office in the parish to find there were so few who frequented the Holy Communion; I am afraid to say how few, that could be regarded as regular communicants. Of course I do not reckon those who were present officially, who presented themselves during the term of their office, and seldom or never when out of it. In order to put an end to this profanation, I longed to tell them, they had better not come at all. I knew how few attended Church, but I found—I grieve to say it—that in many cases their coming seemed to have little influence on their lives and conversation. They seemed to think that by attendance at Church, they were doing something, at any rate more than others. So they were, as far as that goes, but when I told them that if they really desired to love CHRIST and to serve GOD, to do their duty towards GOD and their duty towards their neighbour, to overcome

the evil that was in them, and grow better, that then they would come and come often to feed on the Blessed Sacrament; when I spoke to them in this manner, there was no response to my remonstrances. A settled secret conviction was, I now believe, fixed in their minds, that they ought to have a sense of acceptance before their partaking, and as I had never got this myself, I knew not how to deal with their condition. After a while I ceased to urge them to come, for this reason, that I saw clearly enough, their hearts were not whole with God, and I suppose they knew this better than I did. How to bring any of them closer to God was beyond me, but I saw that it certainly was best for them not to frequent the Holy Communion in their present mind; and that were I to try to induce them, it would be like beginning at the top instead of beginning at the bottom.

I have no reason to think that the tone and habits of the people of this parish differed from that of others. On the contrary, I believe it to be an average specimen of a Cure in the Deanery. And I ask, my Reverend Brethren, in the spirit of meekness, if you have reason to be satisfied with those in your several parishes, who frequent the Holy Communion? Does there seem to be any heart in their devotions? Are they constant in their attendance on the Ordinances of the Church? Do they give evidences in their daily habits of Holy Living? Are they, *as a class*, so different from others, as to be patterns to the flock? You have no need to answer me, for I have had your

answer already, when I myself was in darkness. As one of you once said, that if you had some five persons in your parish, in whom you could have confidence, that they were desirous to serve God as obedient children of the Church, you should have some satisfaction and hope of progress, but that you had not. Have you two, I ask you? Have you one?

To the poor the Gospel is preached. The poor man, if he be indeed seeking after religion, will never be satisfied with anything short of the glorious realities which the Gospel promises. So we find that the religious poor have for the most part become separate from the Church, or at least have joined some society which is outside the Church. They have sought salvation in the meeting-house, where CHRIST Crucified has been held up before them: where they have heard preachers, who told them freely, what they themselves had been forgiven, and of One who was equally ready to forgive them also: where too, they could hear in glowing language of the joys and comforts of the HOLY SPIRIT, which are given to all who believe on His Name. Is not this a fair statement of the case? Nay, have not some of you told me that a prevailing idea among your people was, that the religion of the Church was very well as far as it went, but that if a man wanted something more, then, because the Church could not, or did not supply it, he must have recourse to the meeting-house. It is not necessary for me to say anything after this. What is the

want, is sufficiently evident. Therefore that I may not make this letter too long, I will just mention one more statement that may be interesting, and help to shew the want of vitality in the system that is at present in operation.

Last summer there was a Confirmation amongst us, and it fell to my lot to prepare some dozen or more young persons for receiving the Gifts of the HOLY GHOST. I took great interest in this work, and strove, according to the light I had, to make them seriously-minded. Perhaps I succeeded in doing so with some of them. I believed that if only they would become conscientious children of the Church, and do what she bade them do, all would be well. And so it would, if I had known that the Church requires all her children to be forgiven, before she receives them to any of her Ordinances, I mean that all mortal sins committed after Baptism must be blotted out, by the Atoning Blood of Christ, before the Church can receive them as renewed children. For mortal sin separates the soul from God, and if the soul is separated from God and has not peace with Him, to what purpose are all Ordinances and the Holy Sacraments! Had I known this last summer, I am convinced in my own mind, that I could have led some of those children to seek and to find forgiveness of the sins they had "willingly committed after their Baptism." I should have told them they had still a Loving SAVIOUR, who was ready to receive them, and to speak peace unto them, if they would only cry unto Him for mercy. I feel

sure that they would have done so, and that their young souls would have magnified the LORD, and that their hearts touched by GOD'S SPIRIT would have rejoiced in having found CHRIST to be their SAVIOUR. It is very likely, that as it was, some religious impression was made on them for a time. It is possible, that this may not have yet faded away. But I now know that all is nothing without the forgiveness of sins and the consequent sense of acceptance with GOD. This was the object which ought to have been placed before them, and which they should have been exhorted to seek unceasingly, until they had obtained it.

In illustration of this, let me tell you what happened in a diocese in which I have been lately staying.—A clergyman, who had been violently opposed to the necessity and reality of conversion, or conscious renewal, was mercifully drawn to seek for peace in the very way which he had formerly despised and disbelieved in, but in that way in which alone it can be found. After his conversion, his first prayer was for one who was very dear to him, who soon found peace with GOD. His next cry was for the young people whom he was preparing for Confirmation. I was with him at the time, and witnessed what I am relating.

It was a day or two after this, when the Evening Service had been sung in the Church, he told them of the great salvation which he had received, and invited them if they desired to find JESUS, as he had found Him,

to come to the Parsonage. They all came, and he began to speak to them of the Love of God, telling them if they would only give Him their hearts, and cry for mercy, He was ready at once to accept and forgive them; while he continued talking thus to them, they sobbed aloud. We knelt down. They all unbidden knelt with us, and gave up their hearts to God, earnestly crying for mercy unto Him, to Whom that cry was never uttered in vain. In a short time, He who bindeth up the broken-hearted, imparted the Gift of Faith and the SPIRIT of Comfort. They believed to the saving of their souls, and the HOLY SPIRIT filled their hearts with joy and gladness. Since then, they have continued steadfast in the doctrine which he, as a Catholic, had taught them, and most of them are not only wishful, but anxious to be present, and to partake in the Breaking of Bread, although they have not yet been Confirmed.

How different this is to the conduct and state of mind of unconverted children there is no need to bring before you. As you will know as well as myself, the great difficulty there is in teaching them, or impressing those even who wish for Confirmation, with the value of Ordinances. The fact is, they are not in a fit state of mind to receive them. They have not given their hearts to God, and they know it. In this they are wiser than their teachers. In this state they go to Confirmation, and instead of being Confirmed in godliness are, as alas! the conduct of

too many of them proves, confirmed in indifference or wickedness.

It may be, that a great deal of what I have been writing sounds strangely in your ears, as it certainly would have sounded strangely in mine a few months ago. I can only entreat of you thoughtfully to consider it over, and though it ought to be my place to be sitting at your feet and learning from you, and gladly will I learn from you, still, with all deference, I ask you, my Reverend Brethren, whether you are satisfied with the present state of things. Is your present mode of teaching bringing many souls to GOD? There can be no mistake as to who are GOD's own, in your several parishes. There can be no mistake as to whether a man has received and enjoys the witness of GOD's SPIRIT in his heart. "*We know* that we have passed from death unto life, by the SPIRIT which He hath given us." "*The SPIRIT beareth witness* with our spirit that we are the children of GOD." These are not mere words, but realities consciously possessed by the renewed man, which he feels to be applicable to the state of his own heart. But the unrenewed man, even though he be thoroughly in earnest, is a stranger to this peace of mind. He can have no abiding peace. Hence the reason is, I believe, that so many of the clergy, and I myself was of the number, not finding a sure and all-satisfying peace in religion, are continually seeking for comfort in outward things, even in worldly

things; thus frittering away their time, which might be employed in heavenly occupations, while souls are perishing around them, and no man to care for them. Oh! that their eyes were opened! Did they experience the peace which cometh of God, then all these things would be cast aside as unworthy of them, and they would find abundant occupation in leading other souls to that salvation which they had themselves realized! May God's HOLY SPIRIT lead you into all truth, is my fervent prayer.

It was from a general dissatisfaction, and my realized inability to discharge spiritual duties in the parish, that I was led, as I said, to withdraw from the responsibilities that pressed upon me. What it was that I wanted was not clearly discerned by me. Sometimes I thought it was special Confession that was necessary to bring a man to a state of acceptance with God to enable him to deal effectually with others, and to confer on himself a lasting sense of peace. Sometimes it seemed that perfect peace was not to be enjoyed in this world, and that this was the time of uncertainty. Indeed I opposed the idea that a man could have a certain assurance that his sins are forgiven. Confounding it with assurance of final salvation, I regarded it as a heresy, and a most dangerous one. It however staggered me a little, when the very people in the parish, who professed their disbelief in this knowledge of forgiveness, would constantly ask me what

I thought. For that at any rate, whatever others did, they should never say their sins were forgiven, till they knew they were. This did not at all convince me, but as I say, it used to stagger me a little, as these persons implied from their very words, that there was a latent belief in them of the truth of what they professed to disbelieve. I need not say what system I put it down to as part of, and therefore to be opposed as unsound.

It is not my wish, my Reverend Brethren, that you should take anything on my word, my intention being rather to awaken a spirit of enquiry and thoughtfulness. I trust that nothing has escaped me which has unnecessarily wounded your feelings. For nothing could grieve me more than to think, that words of mine had only tended to increase prejudices, by which the Enemy of souls has taken good care to keep back the earnest-minded from the truth.

My prejudices against Conversion, (more properly, perhaps, called Renewal) if I may use the word, were very strong, rather against the word, than to the thing itself. I had heard a great deal, and seen something of the conduct of some who had been converted, and who were professors of religion. It seemed to me that if theirs were true conversion, it was very different from the conversion spoken of by the spiritual writers whom I revered. To say the least of it, so many of the fruits were wanting. I forgot, or perceived not, that they had no Holy Mother

to take them by the hand, and nurse them; that they had no true shepherds to feed them with the wholesome food of sound doctrine; that the shepherds who ought to have been able to feed them, were themselves starving; and so finding neither food nor guidance, nor sympathy in the Church, they were consequently *driven* as it were to heap to themselves living teachers as they best could.

My own view of their case used to be that they felt God's SPIRIT striving with them strongly at some particular time, and called it the SPIRIT dwelling in them. Many of you, my Reverend Brethren, must have had conversation with such persons, and have heard them describe what they felt at their conversion. You are in the habit, as was I, of putting it all down to their feelings. Now I know by experience, that at Renewal, there is a direct agency of the HOLY SPIRIT on the heart of the believer, which is caused not by previous feelings, but by faith in the Atonement. The feelings of joy that arise do not precede, but follow upon the act of faith. And then it is, that the believer has given him that sense of acceptance with GOD, in which you find him rejoicing.

Before it pleased Almighty God, in His goodness, at the beginning of this year, to call me out of darkness into His marvellous light it was with the greatest unwillingness, that I listened to anything that was said to me about the necessity of every believer being in this state of mind. Not that I disbelieved in sudden conversion, or that I disbelieved

that GOD might reveal to His true and faithful ones, the knowledge of their acceptance with Him. Yet I considered then, as I believe, you do now, that it was not for all. So careless was I about it, and with such suspicion did I look upon it, that though my Spiritual Guide (whom I can never sufficiently bless and thank all the days of my life) assured me that all who sought it found it, yet I wanted to know where the Church taught it. I asked myself who was this man, that should tell me what I wanted, and what I ought to seek for? What right had any single individual in these days, to force his own views (as I thought them) upon me, or to consider that my salvation depended on this.

You see, Dear and Reverend Brethren, were I to ask you to take my word for anything, I should be asking you to do something that I was unwilling to do myself. I was willing, however, to read on the subject; and it was from reading what the Fathers and holy Doctors taught in regard to this, that my mind was convinced that they all had this something, which I had not. S. Cyprian, S. Ambrose, S. Augustine, S. Anselm, and S. Bernard, all spoke with more or less clearness; all sufficiently clear to convince an unprejudiced mind. Together they convinced mine of this, namely, that they took it for granted, that every believer knew that his sins were forgiven him, knew, by experience, what it was to have the testimony of the HOLY SPIRIT witnessing in their hearts, and was also

assured, with the most certain confidence, that he was acceptable to GOD through the mediation of CHRIST JESUS his SAVIOUR. It was plain to me that these Blessed assurances were not mine. It was plain also that they might be mine, for GOD is no respecter of persons: and my Spiritual Instructor, who has been the means of saving thousands, told me, he never knew one who had made up his mind to obtain them, that failed in so doing. Also the glory of GOD and the salvation of souls, which are professedly the objects of every one who is set apart to His service, demanded, that every one should seek of Him, who is so willing to give. I no longer hesitated, but by GOD's Grace sought and found the great reality which I had so long been conscious, was wanting: and I now know, that faith in CHRIST's Atonement, is not the belief of the head, nor the assent of the mind or understanding, but the belief of the heart, which they only can speak of correctly who have themselves experienced its saving efficacy.

The passages from the writings of the Fathers which were the means of opening my eyes, together with some from S. Chrysostom and S. Macarius, have since been translated, in the hope that they may have a like beneficial effect upon others. They are now published,* with Scriptural

* "Teaching of the Types. A Series of Tracts to the Clergy and the Earnest-minded." No. IV. is on the Certainty of Grace, and contains the authorities mentioned. Whitaker, London; Shrimpton, Oxford; and Harrison, Leeds.

authorities, for the certainty of Grace ; so that, as an English doctor observes, "Touching this point it is very evident that the Church of God ever taught that which we now teach."

May I ask you, my Reverend Brethren, to forget all about me, what I am or have been, and to read for yourselves ; that you may be able to form some idea as to what it is that fills the meeting-house with hearty worshippers, and what it is that fills the Church with cold formalists, or rather keeps it empty : what it is that gives life to the untuned hymns of the separatist, what it is that causes such deadness in the singing of the Holy Songs of the Church. Ask yourselves, Is there not a cause ? Experience proves in these days the truth of the words of S. Ambrose, that the man who is certain of his own salvation is certain also to acquire that of others. For, wherever there has been a clergyman to whom the renewal of the HOLY GHOST has been vouchsafed, there, in his parish, has the work of GOD been begun, and many souls have been rescued from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. So might it be expected, if any one of you were to realize a saving interest in CHRIST'S Atonement. Then would the Gospel be preached not in word only, but in power. Without doubt many would be hardened against it, because assuredly, only a remnant will be gathered out of the world in these last days. But living words cannot come forth from a lifeless soul. We do not expect the

body of a man, after the departure of the soul, to show signs of life. However beautiful the body might be, it would be lifeless, dead. So is the case of the unrenewed man. He has not spiritual life, and will never convert any one to God. At least he will never be conscious that he has done so, as he himself is ignorant of what conversion is.

If it be asked, Where are the Catholic doctrines and practices that you so zealously contended for, I make answer, Simply where they were. What the Catholic Church has ever held and taught: I hold and teach; more particularly what the Catholic Church has ever held and taught in regard to Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, and the other Ordinances,—so I hold and teach. Neither do I think with respect to Catholic Observances, that they can *ever* be safely disregarded; or, that modern expedients can ever supply the lack caused by not carrying out the Church system. This does not prevent my seeing that these things are the privileges of children who know that they are in a state of acceptance with God their FATHER, and for them only. Others may approach them, and they may be mercifully made a blessing to those who ignorantly so approach. But properly speaking they do not belong to them; nor can they possess the true benefit of them. Let me say once for all that opinions have nothing whatever to do with a saving belief

in JESUS CHRIST. "Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved."

In concluding this Letter to you, my Reverend Brethren, I again beseech you to receive it in the same spirit in which it has been written. If I have advanced anything erroneous, or contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church, I only wait to be shewn it, in order that I may be corrected. If, however, you say that you know these things, and have long known them, I say that the reality of Renewal is shown by the effects it produces. Light communicates light, and the light and fire of GOD'S SPIRIT in the heart of man enlightens and inflames the hearts of others. The knowledge of the letter neither gives life to others nor light to itself; it only killeth. That all of you will say, that you have realized the indwelling of the SPIRIT, I do not believe. But should you be unable to see what is the meaning of what I have written, it would be nothing strange. Spiritual things will ever be spiritually discerned, and the natural man cannot receive them, for they are foolishness unto him.

It would have been more in accordance with my feelings, to have spoken privately on these matters, with such of you as were willing to hear me. But if this letter be the means of leading one of you to prayer and thoughtful consideration, my object will have been gained. It is

written, that God makes use, as instruments, in His work, of those who seemed least likely to human reasoning. He chooses the base things of this world, and things lightly esteemed, to bring to nought the counsels of the learned, and to confound the wisdom of the wise. May He of His mercy grant that this may be so in the present case.

I remain,

Your humble and obedient,

Servant and Brother,

R. COLLINS.

Ascension Week, 1854.

"NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give
Glory: for Thy loving-mercy, and for Thy Truth's sake."
